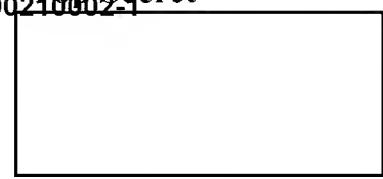




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National Intelligence Daily (Cable)

26 February 1979

State Dept. review completed

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IRAN

Ayatollah Khomeini will leave Tehran tomorrow to live in the holy city of Qom, according to [redacted] the US Embassy in Tehran. Khomeini's Revolutionary Committee, which has acted as an independent authority above the government, is being disbanded. [redacted]

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These developments--along with the government's announcement over the weekend that a referendum on an Islamic Republic will be held on 21 March, followed by a referendum on a new constitution and election of a parliament--seem aimed at strengthening the authority of Bazargan. [redacted]

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Bazargan, however, continues to face grave problems. Neither he nor Khomeini have been able to gain effective control of the country. Revolutionary committees in government ministries, businesses, and elsewhere pay scant heed to government directives. Leftists of various stripes exert strong influence in many of these committees. [redacted]

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The government still lacks a reliable security force, and thus is unable to restore order. The military and police in most areas remain in disarray. The Mujahadin, the former terrorist organization loyal to Khomeini, is serving as the main military force in Tehran but may not be responsive to Bazargan once Khomeini departs. One of its leaders, in a rare public statement this weekend, took a position directly contrary to the government when he demanded the formation of a "people's army," and called for "people's councils" to run government offices, businesses, universities, and military garrisons. [redacted]

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In the present circumstances, there appears to be no immediate prospect for ending the state of anarchy prevailing in Iran or for arresting the challenge posed by leftist forces to the Bazargan government. The leftists do not appear intimidated by Khomeini, whose popularity is likely to wane with continued chaos. Neither Khomeini nor Bazargan now appear inclined to grant the leftists' demand for a direct voice in the government and the leftists show no readiness to give the Bazargan government a breathing space. [redacted]

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BRIEFS AND COMMENTS

EL SALVADOR: Rightwing Challenge

//President Romero's ineffectual response to the recent sharp increase in terrorist activities by leftist guerrilla groups appears to be costing him his right-wing support in the business community and the military establishment. This loss, combined with a general uneasiness about the Sandinista campaign in nearby Nicaragua, has led to a surge of speculation about a possible coup by ultraconservatives within the armed forces. Whether or not Romero succeeds in retaining office, government security forces are likely to clamp down harder, provoking even more violent reprisals by the growing leftist organizations.//

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//Coup rumors are never far beneath the surface of Salvadoran politics but they have been especially rife during the past month. Several of Romero's erstwhile military backers are said to be turning against him--including the commander of the strongest army unit in the capital. The plotters are reported to be led by ex-President Molina and intend to push the government toward a more repressive stance, either by pressing Romero or by replacing him with a junta of conservative officers.//

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//The private sector, the administration's other important constituency, also appears to be wavering. Several leading businessmen have been implicated in the rightwing plotting. Others have circulated an open letter calling on the President to "wage war on terrorism," which has recently erupted in a wave of kidnappings, bombings, and assassinations.//

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The rightward trend in El Salvador implies that the government will be less receptive than it has been to international human rights concerns and also reduces the likelihood of a moderate political solution to El Salvador's many socioeconomic problems. Further polarization, with guerrilla terrorists preempting the left and the government moving toward the repressive right, could well lead to increased bloodshed in the near future.

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